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ABSTRACT

The importance of developing culturally specific tests for black children is addressed, along with the overall issue of whether a criterion used to discriminate among groups is valid for the population for which it is used. In addition, a brief historical review illustrates accessibility to full participation of citizens and noncitizens of early civilizations as well as present-day performance on pencil-paper measures as a means to gain access to fuller benefits in society. An illustration of misuse of testing results was the use of Army data by C. C. Brigham (1923) to indicate the ability of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Data on recent Italian immigrants were used to indicate innate ethnic differences and there was no cross-tabulation by years of schooling or other relevant factors. A 1974 study (Robert Williams) measured the effects of test instructions written in black dialectical language and in standard English on the performance of black children during intelligence testing. Children who took the test representative of their cultural background scored significantly higher than the other group. It is suggested that a criterion will be enhanced if it is developed by the population for which the measure is designed, and that minorities engage in such research and evaluation activities. The design and use of the Pupil Evaluation Measure with prekindergarten children attending a federally funded program at Baltimore City Public Schools is also addressed. (SW)

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Research Focus On Black Education

Increasing Minority Participation in Educational Research and Development in Local Educational Agencies: Needs, Issues, Options

A PERSPECTIVE

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Research Focus On Black Education
American Educational Research Association and
The National Institute of Education

Increasing Minority Participation in Educational Research and Development in Local Educational Agencies: Needs, Issues, Options

A PERSPECTIVE

by

Edward N. Whitney

To the extent that a member of the community of man is disposed to remain passive and let others explain his "reason d'etre", then he deserves whatever "pigeon-holing" designating non-representative "ex-spurts" might bestow on him. The appropriateness of the dilemma posed by such a lethargic and passive disposition is accentuated by the logic and resolve as articulated by the Pirke Aboth or (Ethics of the Fathers), Chapter I, Verse 14:

> If I am not for myself,
> Who is for me?
> If I am for myself alone,
> What am I?
> If not now,
> When?

While it should be apparent, the aforementioned is of a general frame of reference and does not exclusively address the circumstance peculiar to any particular ethnic or racial segment of the community of man. While, historically, instances can be repeatedly cited illustrating the tendency, on the part of conquering armies and cultures, of rationalizing their victorious ascendency as confirmation of their divine or destined superiority over an inferior and vanquished foe. The resulting system of transmitting codes of behavior appropriate for citizens and non-citizens continually reinforced the notion of some inherent advantage in being a member of the citizenry.

The plight of the non-citizen has been tumultuous, to say the least, in his efforts to attain qualifications in order to become an accepted citizen. In this same context, DuBois (1965) makes reference to the situation confronting the slave as non-citizen in ancient Greece and Rome.

> Slaves were freed for meritorious service, especially for fighting in wars. Sometimes they bought their freedom and sometimes were freed by will. The position of the freed men was peculiar; they never became full-fledged Athenian citizens but remained in a sort of dependence on their former masters. The masters still protected them and they still owed him certain debts although they now owned their own land and their children were free.

Despite the fact that these non-citizens variously held positions of the stature of teacher, artisan, physician, librarian, thespian, philosopher, and secretary, these services, of critical importance to the respective communities, were still insufficient to accord citizenship to the possessors.

The "writ de passage" for the non-citizen to gain full participation in the local society as a full-fledge citizen, has, in the literature, been described from the context of a Moslem setting where the essential criterion is converting to Islam to criterion frequently found in the western world based on "pencil-paper" tests. The appropriateness of any of these procedures is a matter of their fairness, objectivity, and intent of purpose. By fairness, performance on the criterion is not a matter of previous experience or insight; by objectivity, performance on the criterion is not an advantageous matter of cultural identity; and by intent of purpose, performance on the criterion will reflect random variation across groups to a statistically comparable degree.

The apparent thrust of this presentation, up to this point, has concerned social settings and the accessibility to full participation by citizens and non-citizens.

Central to this presentation is the fact that entree into full participation has been a domain and rationalization of those individuals benefitting by the status quo. It is essential that those seeking entree understand the historical and phenomenological bases for whatever the criterion, central to the issue, might be. Cronbach (1975) presents an indepth over-view of the evolution of psychological testing or criterion for accessibility in fundamental social settings as have occurred in the United States since the turn of the century. The implications for contemporary minorities, or others seeking a more equitable share of opportunities guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, should ring clarian clear.

A primary underpinning of the Progressive movement, at the turn of the century, was the power of social science to redirect and reshape society. Darwin and Comte, between them, had made the point that man and his institutions are inclined to scientific, iconolastic analysis.

Within the Darwinist camp, such men as T.H. Huxley and L.F. Ward read the evolutionary message as a call for social activism to redesign institutions so that men would prosper in them. The American reformers expected factual analyses to free society from ills that ranged from political corruption to prostitution, from despoliation of the environment to child labor. The social survey took its place alongside the journalistic expose as a way of determining what should be set right and now. Efficiency and scientific management in the mode of industry were to be brought to social institutions (Cronbach, 1975).

> In education, few studies have had the impact of Ayres' (1909) Laggards in the Schools, which counted how many children were below the grade normal for their age and tallied up the economic and social costs of such retardation. At the same time, the child-study movement was deploring the emotional costs of a Procrustean school system.
>
> With the out-going of child labor, the junior high and vocational high schools coming in, and high school booming, superintendents were greatly concerned about coping with an expanding range of abilities. The mental test, fresh from its triumph in the Army, promised to sort out pupils who should move slow, those who should go to college, and those who should not. The testers and their audience were sympathetic with the bright child forced to poke along at the average pace and with the dull child pressed to keep up. The tests would allow grouping by ability and would pick out the talented children for special encouragement.
>
> Virtually everyone favored testing in schools; the controversies arose because of incautious interpretations made by the testers and, even more, by popular writers. Debate was touched off by the official memoir on the Army data, specifically by the two (2) pages (out of 800) describing the distribution of soldiers' scores. Scores had been converted to a mental-age scale, and after reporting the average score of thirteen (13) for the white draft, the writers added two sentences by way of popularizations: 'A moron has been defined as anyone with a mental age from 7 to 12 years. By this definition... almost half of the white draft would have been morons' (Yerkes, 1921, p. 789). The comparability of the sample to 13 year - olds need not have been too disconcerting, at a time when most adults have left school by age 14.

But the theoretical standard of maturity had been taken as 16 years of mental age, which argued that the typical soldier was markedly deficient.

Popular writers, especially those associated with the eugenics movement, drew broad elitist conclusions from this 'finding'. Popenoe (1921) for example, wrote 'Can we hope to have a successful democracy where the average mentality is 13?' (p. 233), and he went on to quote Goddard's reading of the data: 'Obviously there are enough people of high intelligence to guide the Ship of State, if they are put in command. The disturbing fear is that the masses... will take matters into their own hands' (Goddard, 1920, p.97). Albert Wiggam declared that efforts to improve standards of living and education are folly because they allow weak elements in the genetic pool to survive, that men are born equal is 'a great sentimental nebulosity', that social classes are 'ordained by nature,' and that 'slum-people make the slums' (p. 645).

Racism, directed against immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, was active, and the Army data provided ammunition for it. The psychologist, C.C. Brigham (1923) was persuaded by one of the advocates of racial purity to rework the Army data on ethnic groups into a book. Brigham did warn that the Italians, for example, recently come to this country, were probably not representative of the population of Italy; but his attempt to confine his conclusions to immigrants was not made prominent, and it escaped the attention of most persons who cited or attacked his work. Likewise, Brigham acknowledged that tests were not pure measures of innate ability, but he was sure that innate racial differences had been proved to exist. So closed was his mind that in what purported to be the definitive tabulation of the Army data by ethnic origin, he presented no cross-tabulation by years of schooling or the like. Social scientists quickly came to realize that the evidence proved nothing about group differences, and Brigham was the subject of criticism. But Brigham let his book stand for years. His only published acknowledgement of criticism was a side remark: psychologists should work on their data and ignore armchair challengers (Brigham, 1926). Brigham (1930) did disavow his studies in a professional journal, and since that time psychologists have been happy to point to this as evidence of the scientist's openness to correction.

> But Brigham's 'retraction' was on the largely irrelevant grounds that the Army tests were inhomogeneous; he bowed not at all to the professional consensus that ethnic comparisons themselves are meaningless.

Use of the analogy serves to highlight the general application of the dilemma confronting those who are the "outs" who need to understand the nature of the construct for the criterion, and the psycho-social necessity for maintaining the status quo by the "ins". An attempt has been made by the writer to present manifestations of this phenomena from a historical illustration involving citizens and non-citizens of early civilizations, to present-day performance on pencil-paper measures in order for one to acquire access to fuller benefits in present day society.

In the example, as cited by the Cronbach article, illustrations are made as to how the problem for the "outs" can transcend racial and ethnic characteristics. But, when an easily observable racial group becomes the brunt for such identification as the "outs" group, the problem becomes far more difficult to counter or change. It behooves the "outs" to identify among their own those inclined toward the sciences, to encourage the scientific scrutinizing of prevailing criteria and their constructs, and to ascertain objectively, fairly, and possible purposes for the information obtained by such criteria. In this same vain, Robert L. Green has written:

> Grouping children according to supposed ability (known as tracking) has been a widely accepted educational practice in the United States. Recently, however, it has been attacked. Black parents in San Francisco obtained a court order prohibiting school officials from using I.Q. tests as a basis for placing black children in classes for the mentally retarded. This court order publicly recognized that pigeonholing, on the basis of test scores, may very well limit a child's chances for success in life. Countless competent black scholars and professionals never would have achieved success had they been programmed according to test scores.

Robert Williams, an outstanding psychologist and director of black studies at St. Louis' Washington University, calls the I.Q. test the hired gun in the ward of scientific racism. Williams, himself, was almost a victim of I.Q. testing.

At 15, his I.Q. score was 82, only a few points above the special education class. His counselor urged him to become a brick layer. Instead, he went on to earn a Ph.D. at Washington University.

L. Wendell Rivers and Robert Williams conducted a study to measure the effects of test instructions written in black dialectal language and in standard English on the performance of black children during intelligence testing (Williams, 1974).

> We divided 890 black kindergarten, first, and second grade children into two groups of 445 each. We controlled, for the variables of I.Q., age, sex, and grade in both the expermental and control groups. We used the standard version of the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts (BTBC), and a non-standard version that we developed. The BTBC consists of 50 pictorial multiple-choice items involving concepts of space, quantity, and time. Black teachers and graduate students translated the concepts and objects into the black idiom:

Standard Version	Non-Standard
1. Mark the toy that is behind the sofa.	1. Mark the toy that is in the back of the couch.
2. Mark the apple that is whole.	2. Mark the apple that is still there.
3. Mark the boy who is beginning to climb the tree.	3. Mark the boy who is starting to climb the tree. (Variations may be used as: about to, getting ready to.)

> Children who took the test that was representative of the cultural background, i.e., the non-standard version, scored significantly higher than the other group. The language of standard version penalized the children taking the Boehm test.

The above study strongly suggests the need to develop cultural specific tests for black children. Consequently, the development by Robert Williams of the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity (BITCH) resulted because he felt that there should be a test that was as fair to the majority of blacks as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children was for the majority of whites.

It is the opinion of the writer that numerous examples can be cited illustrating how the construct for criteria can be applied in more technically correct and humane ways following the participation of more representative developers. A particular case in point relates to a federally-funded ESEA, Title I pre-kindergarten program operating in the Baltimore City Public Schools. The Early School Admissions Project had been in operation for about ten years, and had been evaluated by both internal and external resources.

The results of these evaluations were inconsistent in their identification of key indicators that would "tell" whether the program had positively impacted the three to four year olds participating in the program. The primary evaluation measure used during the period the program had been in operation was the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test. A secondary measure used was the Curriculum Embedded Test, a locally-constructed test reflecting instructional activities presented to the young participants.

Given the inconsistencies concerning achievement reflected by prior evaluation reports, and insufficient data to indicate long-term benefits being maintained by the pupils, the Project Manager requested the evaluation office to assist her in developing a more appropriate measure. The suggestion was made that the measure reflect an orientation consistent with learning theory as espoused by Jean Piaget (Whitney, 1976).

The instrument was characterized as requiring the pupil to perform different tasks associated with each of its program objectives. Three distinct levels of tasks were identified, with a respective task associated with a child's ability to perform with the assistance of some concrete object introduced to facilitate task conceptualization. The second level of task activity is associated with the degree to which performance is a function of the pupil being able to perform the task, partly with the assistance of some concrete object, and partly without any assistance of a concrete object. The third level of task activity is characterized by having the pupil perform totally in the absence of material or oral cues. It is at that level that the child performs at some relative level that Jean Piaget describes as the highest level of cognitive behavior which he calls abstract deductive reasoning.

To this end, the Pupil Evaluation Measure (PEM) was designed. PEM, in turn, was developed to measure program impact on pupils commensurate to their relative cognitive development. Through the development of a dimensionalized achievement cognitive developmental scale, program impact can be observed in the pupil, and depending on the child's cognitive development, the program can be structured appropriately, along with perspective needed for the assessment of program effectiveness.

In conclusion, while the central theme of this paper has been the caution that if access to societal benefits is contingent on an individual's performance on some criterion, then it behooves that individual to be thoroughly knowledgeable about the theoretical construct for that criterion.

It is strongly the position of this writer, that criterion, as referred to in this paper, will be enhanced commensurate to the degree that the several developers are representative of that population for which the measure was designed. It is a reasonable assumption that individuals engaged in the development and construction of tests and related criteria, as referred, will have been sufficiently prepared technically. The extent to which minorities are not engaged in such research and evaluational activities will probably assure the maintenance of atypical patterns of performance as demonstrated by minorities on the traditional measures currently in use.

"A vouloir, c'est pouvoir!"

"To want, is to be able!"

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